

IN THE ABSTRACT:

Please add page 18 to the specification which contains the abstract.

Abstract

The invention relates to a composite used as a liquid-retaining layer in hygiene articles or medical products. Said composite comprises a first layer, made of a substantially continuous staple fiber with a diameter of 15-35  $\mu\text{m}$ , and a second film layer for preventing snagging in the fibrous surface of the staple fiber layer. The composite comprises a third layer of microfibers with a diameter of under 10 $\mu\text{m}$ , covering the whole surface of the staple fiber layer on the side opposite the film layer. A three-layer composite is thus formed. This third layer of microfibers penetrates the surface structure of the staple fiber layer in such a way that the average distance  $D'$  between the microfiber layer and the sheet layer is less than the thickness  $D_{sp}$  of the staple fiber layer which is sandwiched in between.

REMARKS

Receipt of the Office Action of May 17, 2002 followed by the cited art is noted.

Claims 1-21 were presented for examination. These were subjected to a restriction requirement to which applicants elected claims 1-19.

Claims 1-19 have been examined and rejected under 35 USC 112 and 35 USC 103(a).

To address the rejection under 35 USC 112, claims 1-19 have been replaced by new claims 22-47, which are believed to be definite and in full compliance with the provisions of 35 USC 112. For example, the use of a narrow range within a broad range in the same claim has